

[Royal Jackman]

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Marie Carter

Anthony, N. M.

OLD TIMER STORIES

Royal Jackman (Wife: May Bailey Jackman)

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Regarding the early days of Anthony and the Mesilla Valley Royal Jackman said: "I located in this valley when I was a young man. Funny, too, I thought I knew it all. That was in 1892. I was sent here from Nevada by the Santa Fe Railroad company as station agent and telegraph operator. Prior to leaving Nevada I had heard that the settlers down here got the Mexicans indebted to them then took their land. Consequently, I was surprised, to find the settlers to be honest hard working folks with no inclination to be outstanding as land sharks in the history of the Southwest."

Mr. Jackman paused then resumed: One day I saw Charley Miller walking up and down in front of his store on the old business street of Anthony, west of the Santa Fe Tracks. He was worried and told me that if some of the Mexicans didn't pay up he wasn't going to carry them on his books any longer. Then I looked at him and said:

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"!Judging from what I have heard you fellows down here get all that's coming to you and a great deal more.! C. 18 - [??]

" 'Well,' Charley chuckled, 'maybe we're not as bad as we're reputed to 2 be. When it comes to trading land for merchandise, if that's what you mean, well the natives are more than willing to settle their accounts that way. But most of the merchants prefer cash.'

" 'But,' I suggested, 'land is better than nothing and some day it will bring a good price.'

" 'You're right,' he agreed, 'I guess I've been two kinds of a numb-skull after all.'

"Prior to his death," Mr. Jackman asserted," Charley Miller was one of the biggest land holders in the Mesilla Valley."

In recalling the past Mr. Jackman commented: The greatest epoch in my life was the day I met May Bailey. After seeing the young lady a number of times I became obsessed with a desire to make her acquaintance. The river, incidently, gave me that opportunity. The Rio Grande was unusually high and there was no way to cross it, for we didn't have any bridges. Consequently people either forded the stream or were ferried across. May was standing on the river bank waiting for someone to come along with a boat, unaware that I stood at one of the windows of the Santa Fe station trying to get up nerve to approach her. Finally I made a start for the door, swung it open, hurried to the lady's side, removed my hat and introduced myself. After telling her who I was I offered to launch my boat and ferry her across the big bad river. And the moment she accepted me as a ferryman, I decided, to ferry that young lady the rest of my life."

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Following a short interval Mr. Jackman resumed: "May Bailey lived on a ranch at Chamberino, and her father, Dr. C. A. Bailey, brought his family to the Mesilla Valley from Cherokee, Kansas in 1884. I met May in 1892.

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For five years, on an average of twice a year, I asked her to marry me, but she didn't consent to be my wife until 1897. Then when the day was all set, and our railroad tickets had arrived for our wedding trip to San Francisco, the Rio Grande began to rise. On the morning of our wedding day I was in Anthony on the eastern bank of the river impatiently walking up and down, with a preacher at my heels, and my bride-to-be was on the western bank waiting for her brother, R. C. Bailey, to launch his new boat and row her across. May must have been awfully excited, for when I asked her for her suitcase she handed me a shoe box. Then the preacher shouted:

" 'Make haste or you'll miss that train!'"

" We joined hands and were married in a jiffy. Then the train signaled its approach, and simultaneously an old Irish Woman opened her door and called to us:"

""Why don't yez come into th' house an' be married loike dacent folks?"

Regarding the natives Mr. Jackman observed; "The Mexicans were wise. They'd farm a little and rest a little, for they knew the distroying power of the Rio Grande; they had learned by experience that it was a lost of time and money to farm on a large scale. When I first came to Anthony I homesteaded 172 acres, hired six Mexicans and put them to work. I told them that they could have the wood for clearing the place. Then I sold the wood, which amounted to several car loads, at a dollar fifty a cord and gave them the money. Finally I rented them the land for three years, but I paid for the water, seed and

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fencing. I also built them an adobe house. One day I found them all taking their noon-day siesta, or after-dinner nap and said:

" 'Why don't you fellows work like us Americans?'

"One old fellow smiled, finished rolling his cigarette, sealed it with a lick of his tongue and explained:"

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" 'Yacky, the more you have the more you lose.'

" He referred to the Rio Grande. " I didn't understand the full meaning of his sage remark until the flood of 1905, when I lost everything I had. My hundred and fifty acre crop was ruined; my house swept away, twenty-five head of stock and a head of horses. During that same flood there was a Mexican family morooned on top of a pole house. I rowed out and rescued them just as the poles began to give way."

In the course of his conversation Mr. Jackman mentioned the house where Mrs. Blevins lives, southeast of the Santa Fe office. "That house belonged to Professor Carrea, but he sold it to me. It was our home for several years. I laid out the townsite of La Tuna, just across the line from Anthony. I bought that whole section for one thousand dollars. Most of it lay east of the tracks. My west line ran to the Andreas ranch. I still own 250 feet on the highway in the business section. I used to own the Dairy Farm Ranch west of Anthony, also the McKamey Ranch northwest of town. The ranch I owned back on the desert north-east of Anthony was sold to me by an old Mexican who claimed that the Indians buried a treasure there in the early days, and he was always digging around trying to find it.

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In recalling old times Mr. Jackman said: " One of the funniest things that ever happened to me was the time I borrowed my brother-in-law's horse. My wife had asked her brother if Dick could swim. He told her yes, 'just like a log.' She knew that a log would float so took it for granted that Dick could perform the same feat. When I asked her if Dick could swim she answered in the affirmative; so I decided to borrow the horse and ford the Rio Grande. My wife had crossed to the west side by boat earlier in the day to see her mother, 5 and I was to join her later. Well the moment Dick slid into the water I realized what I was up against. For instead of swimming like a log he sank like a rock, and left me flaundring. Then I grasped his tail, an action that must have frightened him, for he turned up-side-down and began kicking his feet. The moment I released him he floated down stream -- just like a log. In the maelstrom I lost my Mexican sombrero and found myself in a whirlpool going 'round and 'round. Realizing that I was going to have to battle to save my life I discarded every bit of clothing but my shirt, and just as I managed to escape the pool, my hat came floating back to me. My old dog was still with me and barked joyfully as I crept up the western bank of the Rio Grande. My wife told me later that she never saw anything so comical in all her life as the picture I made when I appeared at the ranch. I didn't have a thing on but my shirt and sombrero. In the meantime, Dick must have learned to swim, for he escaped from the Rio Grande, entered a Mexican's corn field, and destroyed so much corn that we had to pay damages."

Royal Jackman was born at Woodstock, New Hampshire August 6, 1863; Mr. Jackman came to the Mesilla Valley in 1892; he married May Bailey of Chamberino, New Mexico June 30, 1897. Mr. Jackman is the father of Winifred Dearborn Jackman, wife of A. T. Aldro Hibbard, prominent artist of Rockport, Mass. Alice Aldrich Jackman, wife of A. E. Nelson of El Paso, Texas, and Royal Bailey Jackman, Mining Engineer, employed by the Cerro Pasco Copper Corporation of Peru. With headquarters at New York.